International Seabed Authority

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Application for the approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area by the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer

Summary submitted by the applicant

I. Applicant's details

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(m)	If applicant is a juridical person, identify:	
	(i) Place of registration; and	(i) Nanterre Register of Companies
	(ii) Principal place of business/ domicile;	(ii) 155, rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau 92138 Issy-les-Moulineaux
	and attach a copy of the applicant's certificate of registration	A copy of the extract from the companies register is attached to section 1 of the application
(n)	Identify the sponsoring State or States	France
(o)	In respect of each sponsoring State, provide the date of deposit of its instrument of ratification of, or accession or succession to, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the date of its consent to be bound by the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982.	Signed 10 December 1982 Ratified 11 April 1996 France is a party to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Its instrument of ratification of the Convention was deposited on 11 April 1996. On that same date, it agreed to be bound by the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982.

1. The plan of work relating to this application is located along the mid-Atlantic volcanic ridge. It consists of 100 blocks, each measuring 10 km x 10 km, grouped into six clusters of between 8 and 25 blocks each.

2. In accordance with regulation 19 of the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Sulphides in the Area, the applicant has elected to offer an equity interest in a joint venture arrangement and, in accordance with regulation 21, to pay the sum of $500,000 for consideration of its application.

II. Equipment and methods

3. France has several high-seas vessels (the *Atalante* and the *Pourquoi pas?*) which may be used for long-term cruises to study the ocean depths. These vessels are equipped with a range of mapping and sampling tools which can provide data and samples at different scales. These vessels also carry submersibles, both manned (*Nautile*) and remotely operated (*Victor*). Detailed studies are supported with the use of towed (side-scan sonar SAR (Système Acoustique Remorqué)) or autonomous (*Aster-X*) systems capable of making near-bottom measurements (acoustic images, magnetic cards, microbathymetric surveys, etc.). In combination, these systems make possible the application of multiscale and multidisciplinary exploration strategies,

the preparation of detailed studies necessary for the evaluation of mineralization processes and the conduct of environmental impact studies.

III. Geological studies

4. The planned operations include regional prospecting approaches, such as drawing regional bathymetric maps, taking acoustic images of the clusters and identifying hydrothermal sites by detecting plumes in the water column. On a local scale, bathymetric maps and high resolution images of the seafloor will be prepared from a remotely operated vehicle in the active and inactive sites. Manned or remotely operated submersibles will be used to gather samples of rocks, mineralization processes, fluids and fauna. Specific geophysical and drilling operations will be conducted to determine the mineralization geometry and composition in three dimensions. All these operations should make it possible to determine the extent and nature of the different types of mineralization. Data gathered in the field will be used in chemical, mineralogical and isotopic laboratory analyses to clarify the different types of mineralization processes. The data acquired will all be integrated into a geographic information system.

IV. Ecological and environmental studies

5. In accordance with the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Sulphides in the Area, the ecological research programme is designed to establish environmental baselines, to put in place an environmental monitoring programme and to assess the impact of the proposed activities. It will include both benthic and pelagic components to assess the biodiversity of the areas under exploration and to identify the environmental factors shaping these communities. Particular attention will be paid to biological and food-web exchanges between ecosystems. Activities will be carried out at:

(a) The active hydrothermal sites, focusing primarily on chemosynthesis;

(b) The inactive sites, focusing primarily on their trophic resources of photosynthetic origin and possibly also on the metabolic pathways for the oxidation of sulphur and metals.

The biodiversity outside the hydrothermal areas will also be studied during geological exploratory dives. The study of the benthic and pelagic components of the environmental programme also includes the microbial component. The planned research will focus on a qualitative and quantitative assessment of benthic and pelagic assemblages and on analyses of the functioning and dynamics of benthic communities.

International Seabed Authority

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Application for approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules

Executive summary*

I. Introduction

1. UK Seabed Resources Ltd, under the sponsorship of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, is seeking approval of its plan of work from the International Seabed Authority for exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone.

2. UK Seabed Resources Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Lockheed Martin UK Holdings Ltd (LMUK). Both UK Seabed Resources Ltd and LMUK are corporations formed under the laws of England and based in the United Kingdom. LMUK employs over 2,000 people at sites throughout the United Kingdom and is a leader in systems integration, working on major programmes spanning the aerospace, defence and civil sectors.

3. UK Seabed Resources Ltd holds rights granting it access to certain data, resources and subject matter expertise of Lockheed Martin Corporation (LMC) related to polymetallic nodule resource surveying, analysis and recovery methods. As such, it may seek to capitalize upon the extensive polymetallic nodule experience and technical capabilities of LMC developed through its historical work, recent analyses and ongoing efforts.

4. The area under application (application area) covers a total surface of approximately 116,000 square kilometres in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone. Separate and distinct from areas currently licensed or reserved by the International Seabed Authority, this is a new claim area for which UK Seabed Resources Ltd holds rights to extensive seabed survey data and samples.

5. UK Seabed Resources Ltd, LMUK and the Government of the United Kingdom are committed to environmentally responsible exploration of deep sea

* Submitted by UK Seabed Resources Ltd.

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resources and seek to conduct the proposed plan of work adhering to the highest environmental standards and in line with the long-standing commitments to responsible environmental stewardship of the Government of the United Kingdom and LMUK.

II. Sponsorship

6. The United Kingdom is the sponsoring State for the application for approval of a plan of work for exploration of the UK Seabed Resources Ltd. The United Kingdom ratified and acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on 25 July 1997.

7. As clarified in the advisory opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 1 February 2011, domestic regulations are an important element of responsible sponsorship. The United Kingdom has enacted deep sea mining legislation and has associated regulations in place, including the Deep Sea Mining (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1981, and the Deep Sea Mining (Exploration Licences) Regulations, 1984. The existing United Kingdom regulations enforce high standards of environmental stewardship, consistent with International Seabed Authority regulations, and reflect the long-standing national commitment of the United Kingdom to sustainable exploration and exploitation of deep sea resources.

8. The United Kingdom has confirmed that UK Seabed Resources Ltd meets all requirements of an exploration licence under its domestic regulations, including requirements of technical and financial capability, effective control and environmentally responsible exploration. As such, the United Kingdom has granted an exploration licence to UK Seabed Resources Ltd for the application area, effective upon the corporation's entering into contract with the International Seabed Authority.

9. The United Kingdom is a global leader in offshore and subsea engineering, with a long history of commercially successful, environmentally responsible recovery of offshore resources. These efforts have created a United Kingdom industry supply chain with a substantial range of products, services and expertise, generating an annual turnover of over £16 billion and supporting directly or indirectly more than 400,000 people in the United Kingdom.

III. Application area

10. The application area has been defined on the basis of extensive prospecting data, including nodule densities, mineral assays and environmental data. In accordance with the International Seabed Authority Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area, the application includes a suggested division of the total application area (approximately 116,000 km^2) into two parts of equal commercial value. The equitability of this division is supported by extensive mineral and environmental data.

IV. Financial capability

11. UK Seabed Resources Ltd will draw upon resources made available to it by LMUK and/or third parties in order to carry out its plan of exploration. LMUK owns all of the capital stock of UK Seabed Resources Ltd and plans to include the corporation within the LMUK group of companies. LMUK expects to be in a position to support the UK Seabed Resources Ltd plan of exploration from LMUK available cash and income from ongoing operations. (LMUK audited financial statements demonstrating such financial capability have been provided to the International Seabed Authority).

V. Technical capability

12. As mentioned in paragraph 3 above, UK Seabed Resources Ltd holds rights granting it access to certain data, resources and subject matter expertise of LMC related to polymetallic nodule resource surveying, analysis and recovery methods. Relevant LMC experience from which UK Seabed Resources Ltd may seek to draw is described below:

(a) LMC was the prime contractor and the technology provider for the Ocean Minerals Company (OMCO) consortium, which was one of the leading participants in seabed minerals efforts in the 1970s and 1980s. It subsequently became the successor to OMCO and currently holds title to all assets of the former consortium. As part of its OMCO-related efforts, LMC led the development of sea floor polymetallic nodule resources within the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, including conducting extensive multi-year seabed surveys, developing end-to-end system designs for nodule collection and conducting at-sea testing of a large-scale prototype collection system;

(b) More generally, LMC has more than 50 years of experience in large-scale ocean systems design and development, including multiple deepwater efforts. Examples of projects include: specialized remotely operated vehicles and autonomous underwater vehicles; service capsules for subsea oil and gas construction and production; chamber manifold for subsea oil and gas wells; computer modelling system to predict vessel and payload motions during equipment launch and recovery; oceanographic and meteorological measurement buoy systems; deepwater ocean thermal energy conversion (OTEC) system; and survey vessel instrumentation and customization.

13. The UK Seabed Resources Ltd technical alliance team includes leading experts in the areas of ocean environmental issues, at-sea survey methods and techniques, and offshore technology, including former members of the original pioneering seabed nodule consortia.

14. In addition, as a United Kingdom corporation sponsored by the Government of the United Kingdom, UK Seabed Resources Ltd is well positioned to draw on the substantial capabilities available within the United Kingdom's offshore technology industry, including access to some of the most advanced remotely operated vehicles, autonomous underwater vehicles and ocean survey data-collection tools currently available.

VI. Proposed plan of work

15. Under the proposed plan of work, UK Seabed Resources Ltd will (a) collect and analyse a broad range of environmental data to obtain the environmental baseline, (b) conduct survey cruises and analysis to obtain ore body delineation and prioritize commercial recovery operations, and (c) continue systems engineering efforts to further assess the economic viability and overall technical approach of commercial resource recovery.

16. The proposed environmental baseline effort will focus initially on the benthic biological communities in the application area. UK Seabed Resources Ltd has identified a world-class team of leading deep sea ecologists and biologists with extensive benthic ecological experience in the abyssal Pacific Ocean, including the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, to lead this study. Once the initial commercial recovery target site has been identified through the exploration surveys, the environmental baseline effort will be expanded to address more localized phenomena, including water column physics, chemistry and biological communities. UK Seabed Resources Ltd will endeavour to integrate new baseline data with similar data of other contractors across the Clarion-Clipperton Zone so as to maximize the regional insights.

17. As environmental data-collection techniques and tools are continuing to evolve, the proposed plan of work includes periodic workshops to review and select the best techniques and tools for each study. These workshops will include scientists directly involved in the environmental baseline, together with invited external experts.

VII. Environmental protection

18. All proposed activities in the initial five-year period of the plan of work are environmentally benign, with no potential for causing serious harm to the marine environment, and do not require environmental impact assessment, in accordance with section IV.A of the Recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area, issued by the Legal and Technical Commission. The timing of activities which go beyond those set forth in section IV.A of the Recommendations will be guided by obligations to the sponsoring State and a variety of business and other factors, and would not proceed without the relevant and necessary environmental studies and consultations.

19. During the first five years of the exploration programme, UK Seabed Resources Ltd will compile selected environmental data for use in decisions regarding environmental safeguards and monitoring activities pertinent to subsequent exploration activities and commercial resource recovery. Throughout the programme, it will engage with environmental and biological experts to keep abreast of environmental issues and concerns, and will consult with the secretariat of the International Seabed Authority to develop criteria for preservation reference areas.

20. UK Seabed Resources Ltd will, with the support of the Government of the United Kingdom, draw on the expertise in environmental protection of the United Kingdom offshore industry. With over 40 years of experience, the United Kingdom

offshore industry has developed extensive knowledge of safety and environmental stewardship. Safety technologies developed over the years address vessel hull design, protection against fire and explosion, emergency evacuation and personnel training, and many other areas. In addition, the United Kingdom offshore industry has experience working with environmental stakeholders to minimize the environmental footprint of operations, including control and mitigation of underwater sound, wastewater discharge and atmospheric emissions.

VIII. Advancing science

21. UK Seabed Resources Ltd is committed to the advancement of science through the exploration plan of work. In accordance with the aforementioned International Seabed Authority Regulations, UK Seabed Resources Ltd will facilitate the communication of scientific information to the international community regarding its environmental data and findings to improve the community's understanding of the deep sea environment.

22. UK Seabed Resources Ltd is also committed to carrying out comprehensive training programmes for developing State nationals nominated by the International Seabed Authority. In particular, the proposed training programmes will focus on enhancing the skills and experience of scientists, engineers, marine biologists, oceanographers, geophysicists and geologists. UK Seabed Resources Ltd will provide three separate training programmes: the at-sea exploration training programme, the fellowship programme and the engineering training programme. Over the first five-year plan of work these programmes will provide at least 10 trainees with a valuable opportunity to participate in at-sea exploration in order to gain field experience, take courses with leading scientific experts at world-class institutions around the world, or participate in the deep sea engineering programme of UK Seabed Resources Ltd.

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Application for approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules

Executive summary*

1. G-TEC Sea Minerals Resources NV (GSR) is pleased to submit the present application for exploration for polymetallic nodules. The application is for approval of a plan of work for exploration by way of a contract to be issued by the International Seabed Authority. The area in question lies within the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone in the Pacific Ocean. GSR believes it fulfils the requirements set out by the International Seabed Authority and is confident that it has both the technical and financial resources to make a positive contribution to the exploration of the Area and the work of the Authority in this respect.

2. GSR, a Belgian company, is making its application for an area of the seabed where the former Union minière de Belgique, now Umicore, was active under a former United States licence (USA-3) granted to Ocean Mining Associates (OMA). Umicore supports the application and future exploration programme of GSR, and shares its historic expertise in and knowledge of both polymetallic nodules and their industrial refining. This pioneer Belgian involvement in polymetallic nodule exploration and test mining is the inheritance of GSR. A formal letter from Umicore in this regard is included in the application file of GSR.

3. In support of GSR, the Government of Belgium confirms, by letter enclosed in the application, having relevant legislation under preparation and provides the certificate of sponsorship. The Ambassador of Belgium to Jamaica, Mr. Frédéric Meurice, also assists GSR in its contact with the International Seabed Authority.

4. Belgium has a long history of involvement with deep sea exploration and polymetallic nodules. In 1891 renowned Belgian geologist Alphonse François Renard, together with Sir John Murray, wrote the Report on the Scientific Results of the Voyage of *H.M.S. Challenger*, during the years 1872-1876: deep sea deposits. It is this scientific report that initially identified the potential resources of nodules that lie at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

* Submitted by G-TEC Sea Minerals Resources NV (GSR).

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5. Both the Renard Centre of Marine Geology and the Marine Biology Research Group of the University of Ghent support the application made by GSR. The Centre and the Research Group will provide advice and participate in the execution of the plan of work for exploration. The Research Group brings leading edge scientific research into seabed organisms; it has contributed directly to the 2006 Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission work on the biodiversity and distribution of mega fauna associated with polymetallic nodules. The Centre and the Research Group have confirmed their engagement with GSR by separate letters, both of which are included in the GSR application.

6. Professor Michel Hoffert, an expert to the International Seabed Authority from the University of Strasbourg, is an exclusive scientific adviser to GSR. He has a library of information at his disposal as well as the knowledge he has developed over many decades working in the Area on polymetallic nodules. He is also in contact with many experts in this field and forms an important bridge to data and information, both for exploration and for educational purposes. Professor Hoffert will maintain his advisory role to GSR during exploration activities under the plan of work.

7. GSR was set up by G-TEC as an ad hoc daughter company to develop the exploration of the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone in the Pacific Ocean. G-TEC is an engineering and survey company that operates internationally and specializes in exploring, detecting, analysing and surveying underwater sites by using the latest and most sophisticated underwater technology. It is a private company, established in 1993, with headquarters close to Liège, Belgium, and branch offices in the Netherlands, France and Morocco. The company is active in site investigation for major land and marine infrastructure projects. G-TEC intervenes as a specialized contractor and consultant in environment, geophysics, hydrography and engineering geology, and operates around the world, on land and at sea. It provides a highly qualified and motivated team of geo-engineers, Earth scientists, hydrographers, biologists and electronic engineers, who deliver efficient and innovative solutions for site investigation and surveys. G-TEC has become an important player in leading companies towards mining authorization by taking care of the complete application procedure and by identifying favourable areas for future exploitation. These multi-criteria analyses also provide GSR with tools to select the best mining method with regard to technical, environmental and human constraints.

8. The GSR lead partners have significant technical, operational and financial resources and capabilities. They have highly developed logistics skills and operational activities in the offshore industry as well as knowledge of the practicalities of working in the deep seas of the world. They are innovators of both technologies and methods in this type of sector. One key partner is the world leader in its industry and has a history going back well over 150 years. Umicore, also a global player, has significant expertise in materials science, chemistry and metallurgy as well as, through its predecessor, knowledge of polymetallic nodules and the area under application by GSR. The GSR lead partners are well known to the Government of Belgium but have requested that their identity not be made public at this time.

9. GSR, as an entity contractually supported by its partners, has the financial resources at its disposal to undertake the programme of exploration and to meet the International Seabed Authority requirements. Consequently, GSR does not require financing for the proposed activities under the plan of work for exploration through borrowing.

10. In addition to the knowledge, experience and skills of its partners, GSR has seasoned managerial skills and technical capability in-house to meet the exploration programme. It will apply the principles of ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 14001 to the exploration programme.

11. GSR will apply both standard and proven techniques to the exploration programme. It will develop and innovate to meet the needs of the exploration work; exploration requires both adaptive management and the ability to retain focus on the intended goal of the activities, that being to develop sustainable mining for exploitation within the allocated area. The company will seek additional expertise and sound partnerships to enhance the programme and engage in the activities of the International Seabed Authority in this respect.

12. The economic feasibility of exploiting polymetallic nodules is dependent upon geological and environmental conditions, on the one hand, and upon technological issues, on the other. Furthermore, it must be mentioned that most of the area under application is located between latitudes 14° N and 16° N, with a southern extension towards 12° N, which thus situates it in the best latitudinal range in terms of nodule abundance according to the International Seabed Authority's own Technical Note 6.

13. GSR has defined contours of estimated value in the area under application and made a division of that area into two parts of equal commercial value in terms of recoverable metals in mineable areas. It has used consistent and publicly available data (as discussed with the International Seabed Authority). Supplementing that data with information and data by Union minière and the personal archives of the GSR team allows for intelligent interpretation and mapping, thus meeting the Authority's requirements.

14. GSR has approached the division of the application area with a view to fairness and equitability, and to reflect the differences that are found across the application area in terms of nodule abundance and value of metals. It is comfortable that this allows the International Seabed Authority to allocate one part of the area to GSR and to retain the other part as a reserved area on equal terms.

15. GSR has developed a 15-year plan for exploration work, divided into three phases; each phase builds on the work of the previous one and follows a logical progression from better understanding of the environment in the allocated area through development of mining technologies, to full mining tests. This programme aims to arrive at the right technology and methods to take forward a future exploitation programme.

16. GSR applies an important conceptual approach to the exploration programme in expanding its understanding of the allocated application area as well as developing it for the future needs of mankind. It will thus carry out educational and research and development activities to facilitate the exchange of information and build capabilities in developing countries. GSR will provide a training programme for candidates from developing nations and formalize this programme with the International Seabed Authority as part of the contract.

17. The anticipated expenditure in respect of the defined programme of activities is $4.9 million for the first year and $5.8 million each year for the second to fifth years, totalling $28.1 million for the immediate five-year period.

18. GSR fully supports International Seabed Authority regulations and guidelines regarding the need to avoid unacceptable environmental harm to the marine environment. It endorses Authority documents that place a rigorous (but necessary) burden on exploration contractors to consider, assess, monitor and review their possible, potential and actual impacts upon the marine environment, and to report those impacts to the Authority.

19. Possible impacts to the marine environment may be related to the operation of vessels used in exploration; potential environmental impacts may be associated with the exploration activities (in particular those related to mining tests).

20. Environmental parameters will have an effect on practical operability in the area, but are essential in order to achieve responsible mining of polymetallic nodules. GSR is responsible not only in terms of the existing biology, but also for the impact of the physical parameters upon any disturbed sediment and upon the health, social aspects and safety of the people working for the company (directly or indirectly). The GSR programme of oceanographic and environmental baseline studies will involve annual cruises to the allocated area for environmental research and data gathering so as to make possible an assessment of the potential environmental impacts of both exploration activities and subsequent exploitation.

21. GSR will apply the international requirements for vessels (for example, through the International Maritime Organization) that aim to avoid harm arising from the deployment of the exploration vessel. The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships will be applied as will the Shipboard Oil Pollution Emergency Plan to cover the eventuality of fuel and/or lubricant leakage both on board and over the side of the vessel. GSR will also apply controls and measures in terms of safe working practices at sea, as such also addressing potential hazards and pollution to the environment (water, air or people). Moreover, the company will fully respect the heritage aspects of any finds it may make of archaeological or social significance (to the originating nation and mankind in general).

22. Mitigation measures for the possible impacts to the marine environment have also been identified through the application of an environmental impact assessment process to the plan of work for exploration. The requirement to complete and submit an environmental impact assessment (following International Seabed Authority guidelines) a year in advance of mining tests is clearly understood. The major part of the exploration activities consists of a geophysical and hydrographical survey and small-scale sampling using box core samplers, which are activities evaluated by the Authority and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as having no significant adverse environmental impact. However, GSR also recognizes that environmental information will be used to inform and drive mining equipment design.

23. Subsequent to approval by the International Seabed Authority of the application (and allocation of the area for exploration), GSR will deliver a considerable programme of exploration and report thereon to (and through) the Authority. It also notes the encouragement by the Authority of shared working (with others who are undertaking exploration) and will actively engage in such activities (although the GSR programme is not dependent upon such collaboration).

24. Belgium, one of Europe's smallest countries, has no classical on-land mining concessions and is, consequently and contrary to many larger economic powers, very keen on developing the full new potential of the deep sea mining industry.

Deep sea mining is destined to become a competitor of classical on-land mining. In defining that new mining industry GSR and Belgium ally themselves with the International Seabed Authority.

25. Improved knowledge of nodule genesis and both conceptual and data-driven mapping of nodule distribution and abundance on the seabed have been achieved since Union minière was active in the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone. Bearing in mind the different economic context and potential limitations to land-based resources in the future, GSR now wishes to start a new period of Belgian exploration in the former OMA area, assisted and supported by its industrial and scientific partners.

26. On 25 May, GSR transferred the required application fee to the account of the International Seabed Authority and is pleased to confirm its position and future active involvement with the Authority.